A GENERAL VIEW

OF THE ARGUMENTS FOR THE

UNITY OF GOD;

AND AGAINST THE

DIVINITY AND PRE-EXISTENCE

OF

CHRIST:

FROM REASON, FROM THE SCRIPTURES, AND FROM HISTORY.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

IN writing this ſmall piece I have two objects. One is a cheap and extenſive circulation; and the other to ſerve as a guide to thoſe perſons who may wiſh to preſerve upon their minds a juſt idea of the *place* and *value* of any particular argument, in a miſcellaneous controverſy; and to enable them to judge how far any particular advantage in argumentation affects the merits of the queſtion in debate.

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GENERAL VIEW, &c.

I.

Arguments from Reaſon againſt the Trinitarian Hypotheſis.

THAT the doctrine of the trinity could ever have been ſuggeſted by any thing in the courſe of *nature* (though it has been imagined by ſome perſons of a peculiarly fanciful turn, and previouſly perſuaded of the truth of it) is not maintained by any perſons to whom my writings can be at all uſeful. I ſhall therefore only addreſs myſelf to thoſe who believe the doctrine on the ſuppoſition of its being contained in the *ſcriptures*, at the ſame time maintaining, that, though it is *above*, it is not properly *contrary* to reaſon; and I hope to make it ſufficiently evident, either that they do not hold the doctrine, or that the opinion of *three divine perſons conſtituting one God* is ſtrictly ſpeaking an *abſurdity*, or *contradiction*; and that it is therefore incapable of any proof, even by miracles. With this view, I ſhall recite in order all the diſtinct modifications of this doctrine, and ſhew that, upon any of them, there is either no proper *unity*, in the divine nature, or no proper *trinity*.

BIBL CANT ACAD

If, with Dr. Waterland, and others who are reckoned the ſtricteſt Athanaſians (though their opinions were not known in the time of Athanaſius himſelf) it be ſuppoſed that there are three perſons properly equal, and that no one of them has any ſort of ſuperiority over the reſt, they are, to all intents and purpoſes, three diſtinct Gods. For if each of them, ſeparately conſidered, be poſſeſſed of all divine perfections, ſo that nothing is wanting to complete divinity, each of them muſt be as properly *a God* as any being poſſeſſed of all the properties of man muſt be a man; and therefore *three perſons* poſſeſſed of all the attributes of divinity muſt be as properly *three Gods* as three perſons poſſeſſed of all human attributes muſt be three men. Theſe three perſons, therefore, muſt be incapable of any ſtrict or numerical *unity*. It muſt be univerſally true, that *three things* to which the ſame definition applies can never make only *one thing* to which the ſame definition applies. And when by the words *thing*, *being*, or *perſon* we mean nothing more than, logically ſpeaking, the *ſubject*, or *ſubſtratum of properties* or *attributes*, it is a matter of indifference which of them we make uſe of.

Each of theſe three perſons may have other properties, but they muſt be numerically *three* in that reſpect in which the ſame definition applies to them. If, therefore, the three perſons agree in this circumſtance, that they are each of them *perfect God*, though they may differ in other reſpects, and have peculiar relations to each other, and to us, they muſt ſtill be *three Gods*; and to ſay that they are only *one God* is as much a contradiction, as to ſay that three men, though they differ from one another

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as much as three men can do, are not three men, but only one man.

If it be ſaid, with the Antenicene Fathers, and with biſhops Pearſon and Bull, among the modern Engliſh writers, that the Father is the *fountain of deity*, and that the ſon is derived from him, whether neceſſarily or voluntarily, whether in time or from eternity, they cannot be of the ſame *rank*: but the father will be poſſeſſed of an original, a real, and proper ſuperiority to the Son; who will be no more than an *effect* of the Father's exertion of his powers, which is to all intents and purpoſes, making the Son to be a *production* or *creature* of the Father; even though it ſhould be ſuppoſed with the antients that he was created out of the ſubſtance of the Father, and without taking any thing from him. Moreover, as upon this ſcheme the Son was never capable of giving birth to another perſon like himſelf, he muſt have been originally inferior in power to the Father, the ſource from which he himſelf ſprung. On this ſcheme, therefore, there is no proper *equality* between theſe divine perſons; and the Antenicene Fathers did not pretend that there was, but diſtinguiſhed the Father by the epithet of αὐτοθεὸς, *God of himſelf*, and the Son by the inferior title of θεὸς ἐκ θεοῦ, *God of God*, or a derived God.

If it be ſaid that there is only one intelligent ſupreme mind, but that it exerts itſelf three different ways, and has three different modes of action, or operation (which was the opinion of Dr. Wallis, and that which was generally aſcribed to the ancient Sabellians) with reſpect to one of which the ſame divine Being was called the Father, to another the Son, and

another the Holy Spirit; there is no proper *trinity* at all. For on the ſame principle one man, bearing three different offices, or having three different relations or capacities, as thoſe of magiſtrate, father, ſon, &c. would be three different men.

Some repreſent themſelves as believing the doctrine of the trinity by aſſerting, with Dr. Doddridge *, that "God is ſo united to the "derived nature of Chriſt, and does ſo dwell "in it, that, by virtue of that *union*, Chriſt "may be properly called God, and ſuch re-"gards become due to him, as are not due to "any created nature, or mere creature, be it "in itſelf ever ſo excellent."

What this *union* is, in conſequence of which any creature can be entitled to the attributes and honours of his creator, is not pretended to be explained; but as we cannot poſſibly have any idea of an union between God and a creature, beſides that of God being preſent with that creature, and acting by him, which is the ſame thing that is aſſerted by the *Arians* or *Socinians*, theſe nominal *trinitarians* muſt neceſſarily belong to one or other of theſe two claſſes. This is ſo evident, that it is hardly poſſible not to ſuppoſe but that they muſt have been much aſſiſted at leaſt in deceiving themſelves into a belief that they were trinitarians, by the influence which a dread of the odium and other inconveniences attending the Arian or Socinian doctrine had on their minds. The preſence of God the Father with any creature, whether it be called an union with him, or it be expreſſed in any other manner whatever, can

* See his Lectures, propoſition 128, p. 392.

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be nothing more than the *deity of the Father* in that creature; and whatever it be that God voluntarily imparts, he may withdraw again at pleaſure. And what kind of divinity muſt that be, which is dependent upon the will of another?

Upon none of the modifications, therefore, which have been mentioned (and all others may be reduced to theſe) can the doctrine of the trinity, or of three divine perſons in one God be ſupported. In moſt of them the doctrine itſelf is loſt, and where it remains, it is inconſiſtent with reaſon and common ſenſe.

II.

Arguments from Reaſon againſt the Arian Hypotheſis.

THE Arian doctrine, of the world having been made and governed not by the ſupreme God himſelf, but by Chriſt, the Son of God, though no contradiction in itſelf, is, on ſeveral accounts, highly improbable.

Our reaſoning from effects to cauſes, carries us no farther than to the immediate creator of the viſible univerſe. For if we can ſuppoſe that, being to have had a cauſe, or author, we may ſuppoſe that his cauſe or author had a higher cauſe, and ſo on *ad infinitum*. According to the light of nature, therefore, the immediate cauſe or author of the viſible univerſe, is the ſelf-exiſtent firſt cauſe, and not any being acting under him, as his inſtrument. However, the ſcheme itſelf is not naturally impoſſible; ſince a being poſſeſſed of power ſufficient to produce the viſible univerſe, which is a limited production, may be *finite*, and therefore may

derive his power, and his being, from one who is ſuperior to him. But though the Arian ſcheme cannot be ſaid to be in itſelf impoſſible, it is, on ſeveral accounts, extremely improbable *a priori*, and therefore ought not to be admitted without very ſtrong and clear evidence.

If this great derived being, the ſuppoſed maker and governor of the world was united to a human body, he muſt either have retained, and have exerciſed, his extraordinary powers during this union, or have been diveſted of them; and either ſuppoſition has its peculiar difficulties and improbabilities.

If this great being retained his proper powers during this union, he muſt have been ſuſtaining the whole univerſe, and ſuperintending all the laws of nature, while he was an infant at the breaſt of his mother, and while he hung upon the croſs. And to imagine the creator of the world to have been in thoſe circumſtances, is an idea at which the mind revolts, almoſt as much as at that of the ſupreme God himſelf being reduced to them.

Beſides, if Chriſt retained, and exerciſed, all his former powers in this ſtate of apparent humiliation, he muſt have wrought all his miracles by a power properly *his own*, a power naturally *belonging to him*, as much as the power of ſpeaking and walking belongs to any other man. But this was expreſsly diſclaimed by our Saviour, when he ſaid, that *of himſelf he could do nothing*, and that it was the *Father within him who did the works*. Alſo, on this ſuppoſition, it muſt have been this ſuper-angelic being united to the body of Jeſus, that raiſed him from the dead; whereas this is an effect which is always aſcribed to God the Father only.

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If, on the other hand, Chriſt was diveſted of his original powers, or *emptied himſelf* of them upon his incarnation, the whole ſyſtem of the government of the univerſe muſt have been changed during his reſidence upon earth. Either ſome other derived being (which this ſcheme does not provide) muſt have taken his place, or the ſupreme being himſelf muſt have condeſcended to do that which the ſcheme ſuppoſes there was an impropriety in his doing. For certainly the making and the governing of the world would not have been delegated to another, if there had not been ſome good reaſon in the nature of things (though it be unknown to us, and may be indiſcoverable by us) why the world ſhould have been made and governed by a derived being, and not by the ſupreme being himſelf. And this reaſon, whatever it was, muſt, as far as we can judge, have operated during the time that Chriſt was upon the earth as well as before.

If Chriſt was degraded to the ſtate of a mere man during his humiliation on earth, reaſon will aſk, why might not a mere man have been ſufficient? Since, notwithſtanding his original powers, nothing was, in fact, done by him, more than any other man, aided and aſſiſted by God as he was, might have been equal to.

If we conſider the object of Chriſt's miſſion, and the beings whom it reſpected, viz. the *race of man*, we cannot but think that there muſt have been a greater propriety, and uſe, in the appointment of a mere man to that office. What occaſion was there for any being ſuperior to man for the purpoſe of communicating the will of God to man? And as an example of a reſurrection to an immortal life (to enforce which

which was the great object of his miſſion) the death and reſurrection of one who was properly and ſimply a man, was certainly far better adapted to give men ſatisfaction concerning their own future reſurrection, than the ſeeming death (for it could be nothing more) of ſuch a being as the maker of the world, and the reſurrection of a body to which he had been united. For, as he was a being of ſo much higher rank, it might be ſaid, that the laws of his nature might be very different from thoſe of ours; and therefore he might have privileges to which we could not pretend, and to which we ought not to aſpire.

If the world was created and governed by a derived being, this being, on whom we immediately depended, would be that to whom all men would naturally look. He would neceſſarily become the object of their prayers, in conſequence of which the ſupreme being would be overlooked, and become a mere cypher in the univerſe.

As modern philoſophy ſuppoſes that there are innumerable worlds inhabited by rational and imperfect beings (for all *creatures* muſt be finite and imperfect) beſides this of ours, it cannot be ſuppoſed but that many of them muſt have ſtood in as much need of the interpoſition of the maker of the univerſe as we have done. And can we ſuppoſe either that this ſhould be the only ſpot in the univerſe ſo highly diſtinguiſhed, or that the maker of it ſhould undergo as many degradations as this ſcheme may require?

The doctrine of Chriſt's pre-exiſtence goes upon the idea of the poſſibility, at leaſt, of the pre-exiſtence of other men, and ſuppoſes an immaterial

material ſoul in man, altogether independent of the body; ſo that it muſt have been capable of thinking, and acting before his birth, as well as it will be after his death. But theſe are ſuppoſitions which no appearance in nature favours.

The Arian hypotheſis, therefore, though it implies no proper contradiction, is, on ſeveral accounts, highly improbable *a priori*, and therefore ought not to be admitted without very clear and ſtrong evidence.

III.

Arguments againſt the Trinitarian and the Arian Hypotheſes from the Scriptures.

I SHALL now ſhew, in as conciſe a manner as I can, that the doctrine of the trinity, and alſo the Arian hypotheſis, has as little countenance from the ſcriptures as it has from reaſon. The ſcriptures teach us that there is but one God, who is himſelf the maker and the governor of all things; that this one God is the ſole object of worſhip, and that he ſent Jeſus Chriſt to inſtruct mankind, empowered him to work miracles, raiſed him from the dead, and gave him all the power that he ever was, or is now poſſeſſed of.

1. The ſcriptures contain the cleareſt and moſt expreſs declarations, that there is but *one God*, without ever mentioning any exception in favour of a *trinity*, or guarding us againſt being led into any miſtake by ſuch general and unlimited expreſſions. Ex. xx. 3. *Thou ſhalt have no other God before me.* Deut. vi. 4. *Hear, O Iſrael, the Lord our God is one Lord.* Mark xii. 29. *The firſt of all the commandments is, Hear, O Iſrael, the Lord our God is one Lord.* 1 Cor. viii.

viii. 6. *To us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jeſus Chriſt, by whom are all things, and we by him.* EPH. iv. 5, 6. *One Lord, one faith, one baptiſm. One God, and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.* 1 TIM. ii. 5. *For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Chriſt Jeſus.*

On the other hand, not only does the word *trinity* never occur in the ſcriptures, but it is no where ſaid that *there are three perſons in this one God*: nor is the doctrine explicitly laid down in any other direct propoſition whatever. Chriſt indeed ſays, JOHN x. 30. *I and my Father are one*; but he ſufficiently explains himſelf, by praying that his diſciples might be one with him in the ſame ſenſe in which he was one with the Father. JOHN xvii. 21, 22. *That they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they alſo may be one in us; and the glory which thou gaveſt to me, I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one.*

2. This one God is ſaid to have created all things; and no intimation is given of his having employed any *inferior agent* or *inſtrument*, in the work of creation. GEN. i. 1. *In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth*—ver. 3. *God ſaid, Let there be light and there was light*, &c. Pſ. xxxiii. 6. *By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the hoſt of them by the breath of his mouth*—ver. 9. *He ſpake, and it was done, he commanded, and it ſtood faſt.* Iſ. xliv. 24. *Thus ſaith the Lord, thy redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I am the Lord that maketh all things, that ſtretcheth forth the heavens alone, that ſpreadeth abroad the earth by myſelf.*

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3. This one God is called the *Father*, i. e. the author of all beings; and he is called God and Father with reſpect to Chriſt, as well as all other perſons. JOHN vi. 27. *Labour not for the meat which periſheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlaſting life, which the ſon of man ſhall give unto you; for him hath God the Father ſealed.* JOHN xvii. 3. *That they might know thee, the only true God, and Jeſus Chriſt whom thou haſt ſent.* JOHN xx. 17. *Go to my brethren, and ſay unto them, I aſcend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God, and your God.* EPH. i. 17. *That the God of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the Father of Glory, may give unto you the ſpirit of wiſdom and revelation in the knowledge of him.* COL. i. 3. *We give thanks to God, and the Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.*

4. Chriſt is ſaid expreſsly to be inferior to the Father, all his power is ſaid to have been given him by the Father, and he could do nothing without the Father. JOHN xiv. 28. *My Father is greater than I.* 1 COR. iii. 23. *Ye are Chriſt's and Chriſt is God's.* 1 COR. xi. 3. *The head of Chriſt is God.* JOHN v. 19. *Verily, verily, I ſay unto you, the Son can do nothing of himſelf.* JOHN xiv. 10. *The words that I ſpeak unto you I ſpeak not of myſelf, but the Father that dwelleth in me he doth the works.* MATT. xxviii. 18. *All power is given to me in heaven and in earth.* 2 PET. i. 17. *He received from God the Father honour and glory.* REV. i. 1. *The revelation of Jeſus Chriſt, which God gave unto him.*

It is now alleged that Chriſt did not mean that he was inferior to the Father with reſpect to his *divine nature*, but only with reſpect to his *human nature*. But if ſuch liberties be taken in explaining a perſon's meaning, language has

no uſe whatever. On the ſame principles, it might be aſſerted that Chriſt never died, or that he never roſe from the dead, ſecretly meaning his divine nature only. There is no kind of impoſition but what might be authorized by ſuch an abuſe of language as this.

5. Some things were with-held from Chriſt by his Father, MARK xiii. 32. *But of that day, and that hour, knoweth no man; no not the angels that are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.* MATT. xx. 23. *To ſit on my right hand and on my left, is not mine to give; but it ſhall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father.*

6. As all the dominion that Chriſt has was derived from the Father, ſo it is ſubordinate to that of the Father. 1 COR. xv. 24, &c. *Then cometh the end, when he ſhall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father, when he ſhall have put down all rule, and all authority, and power. For he muſt reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The laſt enemy that ſhall be deſtroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he ſaith that all things are put under him, it is manifeſt that he is excepted who did put all things under him. And when all things ſhall be ſubdued to him, then ſhall the Son alſo himſelf be ſubject unto him who put all things under him, that God may be all in all.*

7. Chriſt always prayed to the Father, and with as much humility and reſignation, as any man, or the moſt dependent being in the univerſe, could poſſibly do. Our Lord's whole hiſtory is a proof of this; but eſpecially the ſcene of his agony in the garden, MATT. xxvi. 37, &c. *And he began to be ſorry and very heavy; Then ſaith he unto them, my ſoul is exceeding ſorrowful even unto death, tarry ye here, and watch with me. And he went a little farther, and fell*

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on his face and prayed, ſaying, O my Father, if it be poſſible, let this cup paſs from me; nevertheleſs, not as I will, but as thou wilt.

8. Chriſt is not only ſtiled a *man* even after his reſurrection, but the reaſoning of the apoſtles, in ſome of the paſſages where he is ſpoken of, require that he ſhould be conſidered as a man with reſpect to *his nature*, and not in *name* only, as their reaſoning has no force but upon that ſuppoſition. ACTS ii. 22. *Jeſus of Nazareth, a man approved of by God, by miracles and wonders, and ſigns, which God did by him in the midſt of you.* HEB. ii. 17. *Wherefore it behoved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren.* HEB. ii. 10. *It became him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many ſons unto glory, to make the captain of their ſalvation perfect through ſuffering.* 1 COR. xv. 21. *For ſince by man came death, by man came alſo the reſurrection from the dead. For as in Adam all die, even ſo in Chriſt ſhall all be made alive.*

9. Whatever exaltation Chriſt now enjoys it is the gift of his Father, and the reward of his obedience unto death. PHIL. ii. 8, 9. *And being in faſhion as a man, he humbled himſelf, and became obedient to death, even the death of the croſs. Wherefore God alſo hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name.* HEB. ii. 9. *But we ſee Jeſus who was made a little lower than the angels for the ſuffering of death, crowned with glory and honour.* HEB. xii. 2. *Looking unto Jeſus, the author and finiſher of our faith; who for the joy which was ſet before him endured the croſs, deſpiſing the ſhame, and ſat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

Let it alſo be conſidered, that no *uſe* whatever is made of the doctrine of the incarnation of the maker of the world, in all the New Teſta-

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ment. We are neither informed why ſo extraordinary a meaſure was neceſſary for the ſalvation of men, nor that it *was* neceſſary. All that can be pretended is, that it is *alluded to* in certain expreſſions. But certainly it might have been expected that a meaſure of this magnitude ſhould have been expreſsly declared, if not clearly explained; that mankind might have no doubt what great things had been done for them; and that they might reſpect their great deliverer, as his nature, and his proper rank in the creation required.

The author of the epiſtle to the Hebrews evidently conſidered Chriſt as a being of a different rank from that of angels; and the reaſon why he ſays that he *ought* to be ſo, is, that he might have a feeling of our infirmities. But, certainly, we ſhall be more eaſily ſatisfied that any perſon really *felt* as a man, if he was truly a man, and nothing more than a man; than if he was a ſuperior being (and eſpecially a being ſo far ſuperior to us as the maker of the world muſt have been) degraded to the condition of a man. Becauſe, if he had any recollection of his former ſtate, the idea of that muſt have borne him up under his difficulties and ſufferings, in ſuch a manner as no mere man could have been ſupported. And it is ſuppoſed by the Arians that Chriſt *had* a knowledge of his prior ſtate, for they ſuppoſe him to have referred to it in his prayer to the Father, for *the glory which he had with him before the world was*; and yet this is hardly conſiſtent with the account that Luke gives of his *increaſing in wiſdom*.

No perſon, I think, can, with an unprejudiced mind, attend to theſe conſiderations, and the texts of ſcripture above recited (which are perfectly agreeable to the tenor of the whole) and imagine

imagine that it was the intention of the ſacred writers to repreſent Chriſt either as the ſupreme God, or as the maker of the world under God.

There is another hypotheſis, of ſome modern Arians, which repreſents Chriſt as having pre-exiſted; but not as having been the creator or governor of the world, or the medium of all the diſpenſations of God to mankind. But thoſe texts of ſcripture which ſeem to be moſt expreſs in favour of Chriſt's pre-exiſtence, do likewiſe, by the ſame mode of interpretation, repreſent him as the maker of the world; ſo that if the favourers of this hypotheſis can ſuppoſe the language of theſe texts to be figurative, they may more eaſily ſuppoſe the other to be figurative alſo; and that whatever obſcurity there may be in them, they were not intended to refer to any pre-exiſtence at all.

The paſſages of ſcripture which are ſuppoſed to ſpeak of Chriſt as the maker of the world, are the following, viz. John i. 3. Eph. iii. 9. Col. i. 15, &c. Heb. i. 1, &c. Theſe, I will venture to ſay, are the texts that moſt ſtrongly favour the notion of Chriſt's pre-exiſtence, and no perſon can doubt but that, if they muſt be interpreted to aſſert that Chriſt pre-exiſted at all, they, with the ſame clearneſs, aſſert that he was the maker of the world. But if theſe texts admit of a figurative interpretation, all the other texts, which are ſuppoſed to refer to the *pre-exiſtence only* will more eaſily admit of a ſimilar conſtruction. Theſe two opinions, therefore, viz. that Chriſt pre-exiſted, and that he was the maker of the world, ought, by all means, to ſtand or fall together, and if any perſon think the latter to be improbable, and contrary to the plain tenor of the ſcriptures (which uniformly repreſents the ſupreme being himſelf,

without the aid of any inferior agent, or inſtrument, as the maker of the univerſe) he ſhould abandon the doctrine of ſimple pre-exiſtence alſo.

In what manner the proper unitarians interpret theſe paſſages of ſcripture, may be ſeen in my *Familiar Illuſtration of particular Texts of Scripture*, in ſeveral of the *Socinian tracts*, in three volumes quarto, and eſpecially in *Mr. Lindſey's Sequel to his Apology*, p. 455, to which I refer my reader for a farther diſcuſſion of this ſubject.

It is only of late years, that any perſons have pretended to ſeparate the two opinions of Chriſt's pre-exiſtence, and of his being the maker of the world. All the ancient Arians maintained both, as did Dr. Clarke, Mr. Whiſton, Mr. Emlyn, Mr. Pierce, and their followers; and I do not know that any other hypotheſis has appeared in *writing*, except that it is alluded to in the Theological Repoſitory.

IV.

Arguments from Hiſtory againſt the Divinity and Pre-exiſtence of Chriſt; or a ſummary View of the Evidence for the primitive Chriſtians having held the Doctrine of the ſimple Humanity of Chriſt.

N. B. To each article is ſubjoined a reference to publications in which the ſubject is diſcuſſed: H. ſignifying the *Hiſtory of the Corruptions of Chriſtianity*, vol. 2. R. *Reply to the Monthly Review*, and L. *Letters to Dr. Horſley*. To each article is alſo ſubjoined, a reference to the following *Maxims of Hiſtorical Criticiſm*.

1. IT is acknowledged by early writers of the orthodox perſuaſion, that two kinds of hereſy exiſted in the time of the apoſtles, viz. that of thoſe who held that Chriſt was ſimply a man; and that of the Gnoſtics; of whom ſome believed that Chriſt was man only in appearance,

ance, and others that it was only *Jeſus* and not the *Chriſt* (a pre-exiſtent ſpirit who deſcended from heaven and dwelt in him) that ſuffered on the croſs. Now the apoſtle John animadverts with the greateſt ſeverity upon the latter, but makes no mention of the former; and can it be thought probable that he would paſs it without cenſure, if he had thought it to be an error; conſidering how great, and how dangerous an error it has always been thought by thoſe who have conſidered it as being an error at all. Maxim 12. H. p. 9.

2. The great objection that Jews have always made to chriſtianity in its preſent ſtate is, that it enjoins the worſhip of more gods than one; and it is a great article with the chriſtian writers of the ſecond and following centuries to anſwer this objection. But it does not appear in all the book of Acts, in which we hear much of the cavils of the Jews, both in Jeruſalem and in many parts of the Roman empire, that they made any ſuch objection to chriſtianity *then*; nor do the apoſtles either there, or in their epiſtles, advance any thing with a view to ſuch an objection. It may be preſumed, therefore, that no ſuch offence to the Jews had then been given, by the preaching of a doctrine ſo offenſive to them as that of the divinity of Chriſt muſt have been. Maxim 12, 13. L. p. 59.

3. As no Jew had originally any idea of their Meſſiah being more than a man, and as the apoſtles and the firſt chriſtians had certainly the ſame idea at firſt concerning Jeſus, it may be ſuppoſed that, if ever they had been informed that Jeſus was not a man, but either God himſelf, or the maker of the world under God, we ſhould have been able to trace the *time* and the *circumſtances* in which ſo great a diſcovery was

made to them; and alſo that we ſhould have perceived the effect which it had upon their minds; at leaſt by ſome change in their manner of ſpeaking concerning him. But nothing of this kind is to be found in the goſpels, in the book of Acts, or in any of the epiſtles. We perceive marks enow of other new views of things, eſpecially of the call of the Gentiles to partake of the privileges of the goſpel; and we hear much of the diſputes and the eager contention which it occaſioned. But how much more muſt all their prejudices have been ſhocked by the information that the perſon whom they at firſt took to be *a mere man*, was not a man, but either God himſelf, or the maker of the world under God? Maxim 13. L. p. 55.

4. All the Jewiſh chriſtians, after the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, which was immediately after the age of the apoſtles, are ſaid to have been *Ebionites*; and theſe were only of two ſorts, ſome of them holding the miraculous conception of our Saviour, and others believing that he was the ſon of Joſeph as well as of Mary. None of them are ſaid to have believed either that he was God, or the maker of the world under God. And is it at all credible that the body of the Jewiſh chriſtians, if they had ever been inſtructed by the apoſtles in the doctrine of the divinity or pre-exiſtence of Chriſt, would ſo ſoon, and ſo generally, if not univerſally, have abandoned that faith? Maxim 6. H. p. 7. R. p. 3. L. p. 14.

5. Had Chriſt been conſidered as God, or the maker of the world under God, in the early ages of the church, he would naturally have been the proper object of prayer to chriſtians; nay, more ſo than God the Father, with whom, on the ſcheme of the doctrine of the trinity, they muſt have known that they had leſs immediate intercourſe.

intercourſe. But prayers to Jeſus Chriſt were not uſed in early times, but gained ground gradually, with the opinion of Chriſt being God, and the object of worſhip. Maxim 14. L. p. 18.

6. Athanaſius repreſents the apoſtles as obliged to uſe great caution not to offend their firſt converts with the doctrine of Chriſt's divinity, and as forbearing to urge that topic till they were firſt well eſtabliſhed in the belief of his being the Meſſiah. He adds, that the Jews being in an error on this ſubject, drew the Gentiles into it. Chryſoſtom, and the chriſtian Fathers in general, agree with Athanaſius in this repreſentation of the ſilence of the apoſtles in their firſt preaching, both with reſpect to the divinity of Chriſt and his miraculous conception. They repreſent them as leaving their diſciples to learn the doctrine of Chriſt's divinity, by way of *inference* from certain expreſſions; and they do not pretend to produce any inſtance in which they taught that doctrine clearly and explicitly. Maxim 13. H. p. 12. L. p. 37. 53.

7. Hegeſippus, the firſt chriſtian hiſtorian, himſelf a Jew, and therefore probably an Ebionite, enumerating the hereſies of his time, mentions ſeveral of the Gnoſtic kind, but not that of Chriſt being a mere man. He moreover ſays, that in travelling to Rome, where he arrived in the time of Anicetus, he found all the churches that he viſited held the faith which had been taught by Chriſt and the apoſtles, which, in his opinion, was probably that of Chriſt being not God, but man only. Juſtin Martyr alſo, and Clemens Alexandrinus, who wrote after Hegeſippus, treat largely of hereſies in general, without mentioning, or alluding to, the unitarians. Maxim 8. H. p. 8. R. p. 8.

8. All thoſe who were deemed *heretics* in early times, were cut off from the communion

of

of thoſe who called themſelves the *orthodox* chriſtians, and went by ſome particular name; generally that of their leader. But the unitarians among the Gentiles were not expelled from the aſſemblies of chriſtians, but worſhipped along with thoſe who were called orthodox, and had no particular name till the time of Victor, who excommunicated Theodotus; and a long time after that Epiphanius endeavoured to give them the name of Alogi. And though the Ebionites, probably about or before this time, had been excommunicated by the Gentile chriſtians, it was, as Jerom ſays, *only* on account of their rigid adherence to the law of Moſes. Maxim 5. H. p. 14. L. p. 25.

9. The *Apoſtles creed* is that which was taught to all catechumens before baptiſm, and additions were made to it from time to time, in order to exclude thoſe who were denominated *heretics*. Now though there are ſeveral articles in that creed which allude to the Gnoſtics, and tacitly condemn them, there was not, in the time of Tertullian, any article in it that alluded to the unitarians; ſo that even then any unitarian, at leaſt one believing the miraculous conception, might have ſubſcribed it. It may, therefore, be concluded, that ſimple unitarianiſm was not deemed heretical at the end of the ſecond century. Maxim 7. L. p. 27.

10. It is acknowledged by Euſebius and others, that the ancient unitarians themſelves, conſtantly aſſerted that their doctrine was the prevailing opinion of the chriſtian church till the time of Victor. Maxim 2. H. p. 18. R. p. 25.

11. Juſtin Martyr, who maintains the preexiſtence of Chriſt, is ſo far from calling the contrary opinion a *hereſy*, that what he ſays on the ſubject is evidently an apology for his own; and when he ſpeaks of *heretics in general*, which he

he does with great indignation, as no chriſtians, and having no communication with chriſtians, he mentions the Gnoſtics only. Maxim 12. H. p. 17. R. p. 15. L. p. 127.

12. Irenæus, who was after Juſtin, and who wrote a large treatiſe on the ſubject of hereſy, ſays very little concerning the Ebionites, and he never calls them *heretics*. Thoſe Ebionites he ſpeaks of as believing that Chriſt was the ſon of Joſeph, and he makes no mention of thoſe who believed the miraculous conception. Maxim 12. H. p. 15. L. p. 32. 118.

13. Tertullian repreſents the majority of the common or unlearned chriſtians, the *Idiotæ*, as unitarians; and it is among the common people that we always find the oldeſt opinions in any country, and in any ſect, while the learned are moſt apt to innovate. It may therefore be preſumed that, as the unitarian doctrine was held by the common people in the time of Tertullian, it had been more general ſtill before that time, and probably univerſal in the apoſtolical age. Athanaſius alſo mentions it as a ſubject of complaint to the orthodox of his age that *the many*, and eſpecially perſons of *low underſtandings*, were inclined to the unitarian doctrine. Maxim 4. 10. R. p. 26. L. p. 49.

14. The firſt who held and diſcuſſed the doctrine of the pre-exiſtence and divinity of Chriſt, acknowledge that their opinions were exceedingly unpopular among the unlearned chriſtians; that theſe dreaded the doctrine of the trinity, thinking that it infringed upon the doctrine of the ſupremacy of God the Father; and the learned chriſtians made frequent apologies to them, and to others, for their own opinion. Maxim 10. H. p. 54.

15. The divinity of Chriſt was firſt advanced and urged by thoſe who had been heathen philoſophers,

loſophers, and eſpecially thoſe who were admirers of the doctrine of Plato, who held the opinion of a ſecond God. Auſtin ſays, that he conſidered Chriſt as no other than a moſt excellent man, and that he had no ſuſpicion of the word of God being incarnate in him, or how "the catholic faith differed from the error of "Photinus" (one of the laſt of the proper unitarians whoſe name is come down to us) till he read the books of Plato; and that he was afterwards confirmed in the catholic doctrine by reading the ſcriptures. Conſtantine in his oration to the fathers of the council of Nice, ſpeaks with commendation of Plato, as having taught the doctrine of "a ſecond God, derived "from the ſupreme God, and ſubſervient to "his will." Maxim 11. H. p. 20.

16. There is a pretty eaſy gradation in the progreſs of the doctrine of the divinity of Chriſt; as he was firſt thought to be a God in ſome qualified ſenſe of the word, a diſtinguiſhed emanation from the ſupreme mind; and then the logos or the wiſdom of God perſonified; and this *logos* was firſt thought to be only occaſionally detached from the Deity, and then drawn into his eſſence again, before it was imagined to have a *permanent perſonality*, diſtinct from that of the ſource from which it ſprung. And it was not till 400 years after that time that Chriſt was thought to be properly equal to the Father. Whereas, on the other hand, though it is now pretended that the apoſtles taught the doctrine of the divinity of Chriſt, yet it cannot be denied that in the very times of the apoſtles, the Jewiſh church, and many of the Gentiles alſo, held the opinion of his being a mere man. Here the tranſition is quite ſudden, without any gradation at all. This muſt naturally have given the greateſt alarm, ſuch as is now given to thoſe who

who are called orthodox, by the preſent Socinians; and yet nothing of this kind can be perceived. Beſides, it is certainly moſt probable that the chriſtians of thoſe times, urged as they were with the meanneſs of their maſter, ſhould incline to *add to*, rather than *take from*, his natural rank and dignity. Maxim 9. H. p. 20, &c. L. p. 73. 134.

V.

Maxims of Hiſtorical Criticiſm, by which the preceding Articles may be tried.

1. WHEN two perſons give different accounts of things, that evidence is to be preferred, which is either in itſelf more probable, or more agreeable to other credible teſtimony.

2. Neither is entire credit to be given to any ſet of men with reſpect to what is reputable to them, nor to their enemies with reſpect to what is diſreputable; but the account given by the one may be balanced by that of the other. Summary View, No. 10.

3. Accounts of any ſet of men given by their enemies only are always ſuſpicious. But the confeſſions of enemies, and circumſtances favourable to any body of men, collected from the writings of their adverſaries, are deſerving of particular regard.

4. It is natural for men who wiſh to ſpeak diſparagingly of any ſect to undervalue their numbers, as well as every thing elſe relating to them; and it is equally natural for thoſe who wiſh to ſpeak reſpectfully of any party, to repreſent the members of it as more numerous than they are. Summary View, No. 13.

5. When perſons form themſelves into ſocieties, ſo as to be diſtinguiſhable from others, they never fail to get ſome *particular name*, either aſſumed by themſelves, or impoſed by

others. This is neceſſary, in order to make them the ſubject of converſation, long periphraſes in diſcourſe being very inconvenient. Summary View, No. 8.

6. When particular opinions are aſcribed to a particular claſs of men, without any diſtinction of the time when thoſe opinions were adopted by them, it may be preſumed, that they were ſuppoſed to hold thoſe opinions from the time that they received their denomination. Summary View, No. 4.

7. When a particular deſcription is given of a claſs of perſons within any period of time, any perſon who can be proved to have had the proper character of one of that claſs, may be deemed to have belonged to it, and to have enjoyed all the privileges of it, whatever they were. Summary View, No. 9.

8. When an hiſtorian, or writer of any kind, profeſſedly enumerates the ſeveral *ſpecies* belonging to any *genus*, or general body of men, and omits any particular ſpecies or denomination, which, if it had belonged to the genus, he, from his ſituation and circumſtances, was not likely to have overlooked, it may be preſumed that he did not conſider that particular ſpecies as belonging to the genus. Summary View, No. 7.

9. Great changes in opinion are not uſually made of a ſudden, and never by great bodies of men. That hiſtory, therefore, which repreſents ſuch changes as having been made gradually, and by eaſy ſteps, is always the more probable on that account. Summary View, No. 16.

10. The common or unlearned people, in any country, who do not ſpeculate much, retain longeſt any opinions with which their minds have been much impreſſed; and therefore we always look for the oldeſt opinions in any country, or any claſs of men, among the com-

mon people, and not among the learned. Summary View, No. 13, 14.

11. If any new opinions be introduced into a ſociety, they are moſt likely to have introduced them, who held opinions ſimilar to them before they joined that ſociety. Summary V. No. 15.

12. If any particular opinion has never failed to excite great indignation in all ages and nations, in which a contrary opinion has been generally received, and that particular opinion can be proved to have exiſted in any age or country when it did not excite indignation, it may be concluded that it had many partizans in that age or country. For the opinion being the ſame, it could not of itſelf be more reſpectable; and human nature being the ſame, it could not but have been regarded in the ſame light, ſo long as the ſame ſtreſs was laid on the oppoſite opinion. Summary View, No. 1. 11, 12.

13. When a time is given, in which any very remarkable and intereſting opinion was not believed by a certain claſs of people, and another time in which the belief of it was general, the introduction of ſuch an opinon may always be known by the effects which it will produce upon the minds, and in the conduct of men; by the alarm which it will give to ſome, and the defence of it by others. If, therefore, no alarm was given, and no defence of it was made, within any particular period, it may be concluded that the introduction of it did not take place within that period. Summary View, No. 2, 3. 6.

14. When any particular opinion or practice, is neceſſarily or cuſtomarily accompanied by any other opinion or practice; if the latter be not found within any particular period, it may be preſumed that the former did not exiſt within that period. Summary View, No. 5.

It

It will be perceived that the whole of this hiſtorical evidence is in favour of the proper unitarian doctrine (or that of Chriſt being a mere man) having been the faith of the primitive church, in oppoſition to the Arian no leſs than the Trinitarian hypotheſis.

As to the Arian hypotheſis in particular, I do not know that it can be traced any higher than Arius himſelf, or at leaſt the age in which he lived. Both the Gnoſtics and the Platonizing chriſtians, were equally far from ſuppoſing that Chriſt was a being *created out of nothing*; the former having thought him to be an emanation from the ſupreme being, and the latter the logos of the Father perſonified. And though they ſometimes applied the term *creation* to this *perſonification*, ſtill they did not ſuppoſe it to have been a creation out of nothing. It was only a new modification of what exiſted before. For God, they ſaid, was always *rational* (λογικος) or had within him that principle which afterwards aſſumed a perſonal character.

Beſides, all the chriſtian Fathers, before the time of Arius, ſuppoſed that Chriſt had a human ſoul as well as a human body, which no Arians ever admitted; they holding that the *logos* ſupplied the place of one in Chriſt.

Upon the whole, the Arian hypotheſis appears to me to be deſtitute of all ſupport from chriſtian antiquity. Whereas it was never denied that the proper unitarian doctrine exiſted in the time of the apoſtles; and I think it evident that it was the faith of the bulk of chriſtians, and eſpecially the unlearned chriſtians, for two or three centuries after Chriſt.

FINIS.

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